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# The Classical Review

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# The Classical Review

JULY, 1930

## MEDEA AND DIDO.

(*A paper read in Manchester on February 28, 1930.*)

EVERY modern reader of Homer must have been struck by the very subordinate place assigned in his epics to what might seem to be a matter of great poetic interest and value. To Homer, Helen of Troy is not a leading character in his tale: she was not 'the face that launched a thousand ships and burned the topless towers of Ilium.' She was merely the woman whose conduct made it the duty of the Greek chieftains to launch their ships and burn Troy. The only comment upon her beauty is made by the aged Priam, who is moved by it to say that he does not wonder that a woman of such beauty should have seemed worth fighting for: but he speaks as one who has observed the ways of man disinterestedly and takes them as he finds them. Homer's men, no doubt, desire beautiful women, and will do a great deal to appropriate them, or, losing them, to get them back: but they will do the same for a valuable drove of cattle or for booty of silver and gold. The feelings which prompt men to do these things are known and taken for granted; they interest the poet because without them the great deeds done in battle and in raids would not have occurred. But in themselves they are hardly a matter for his art. Homer will describe the fray or the feast, the launching and the beaching of a ship, the harvesting of the vintage, a race, or a boxing-match—all this will be described with a loving attention to the smallest detail: but the feelings of men and women, except in so far as they furnish the explanation of their actions, or are made vocal in the excitement of action, are not for his verse. This is no prudish reserve; he will be outspoken when he pleases; he has no moral reprobation for Helen to inhibit his utterance. Penelope fares no better than Helen or Calypso in this respect. Even the scene in which Andromache parts from Hector is marked by the

same severe reserve. Andromache, convinced that Hector is going to his doom, begs him not to go: his death will mean widowhood for her and make his son an orphan. Hector 'caresses her with his hand,' reminds her that he is a warrior and must fight, that no one can escape destiny, and that for his wife in the meantime there are the duties of the house. Then he puts on his helmet and departs without even an embrace. This is more than great bravery; this is great good breeding.

It is this discrimination, this strict assessment of interests and values, which gives to the Homeric epic its stately and incomparable grandeur. This is not attained by shamefaced evasions or denials, but by a perspicacious disdain. Achilles and Agamemnon will quarrel *for* a concubine: they are too well bred to quarrel *about* a concubine. Agamemnon makes it a matter of his prerogative, Achilles of his honour. But the girl is not hurried out of sight or spirited away; she stands there for all who think her worth a glance to look upon while the thunder of the mighty quarrel reverberates through the air. The life of the Homeric epic is the life of strong, passionate men and women who do what they please and conceal nothing. But they, and the poet who delights in their life and tells their story, have a delicate and fastidious sense of values; they form not only a social but a spiritual aristocracy.

It is worth while to notice how strong this tradition proved in Greek literature. But the convention broke down at last, and it broke down for a variety of reasons. In the first place its abolition marks an alteration of taste. The fourth century in Greece was a very different world even from the fifth. A profound social alteration had taken place. With the rise of Macedonia, the conquests of Alexander, the



upheaval under his successors, the Greek world became profoundly altered; all its old standards were reversed. In the second place, the old subjects of poetry seemed to have been played out. The old legends had lost the interest and charm which had so long been theirs, and new subjects were looked for to suit new tastes. The Hellenistic age saw a great extension of the scope of elegiac composition, that convenient poetic form into which so much might be cast. The new legends, sought out with diligence to take the place of the old all over Greece, were fashioned to poetic uses in the new medium; and of these new legends a surprising number dealt with the passion of love. When Antimachus of Colophon, at the end of the fifth century, celebrated in elegiac verse his passion for Lyde, he opened up a vein of poetic sentiment, a form of poetic narrative, which had a wide vogue in the following centuries. Antiquarian lore was pressed into the service of the new poetry. Obscure and fantastic legends were given a serious treatment by the new poetic school; and the lovers who lamented and rejoiced over their own amorous experiences, or told the tales of other lovers, tricked out with many fanciful and laboured reflexions, took possession of a large part of the field of Greek poetry. Most of this, to the regret of the curious, has been lost; what much of it was like we can infer from the imitations of it in the Latin elegiac poets; and of what is left in Greek there is not much to make us regret with any deep feeling that we have not any more.

But while the elegiac metre was the elect vessel of the new poetry, the epic fell at last into line with the new movement. In spite of the prevailing taste for shorter poems, one poet had the courage (or, as his critics said, the audacity) to write an epic in the new spirit. Apollonius of Rhodes composed the *Argonautica*, an epic upon the voyage of Jason in quest of the Golden Fleece, in four books. It is typical in many respects of the new school; but it introduced for the first time, so far as we know, into epic poetry a love story as a subject for detailed epic

treatment. The legend of the voyage of the Argo was one of the old heroic tales of Greece, dating no doubt from those early centuries when Greek mariners for the first time burst into the Black Sea and returned with strange tales of the wonders of its shores. And the figure of Medea, the young witch from the land of Colchis, the princess of the breed of the Sun, who, falling in love with the Greek hero, enabled him to win the Golden Fleece and sailed away with him as his bride, took hold upon the Greek imagination. The barbarian princess became the queen of witches, their patroness and mistress to the latest times. Jason abandoned her in the end for the daughter of the King of Corinth, and Euripides had seized upon her case as material for one of his finest tragedies. Apollonius finds his interest not in the deserted matron, but in the young princess, as in her father's palace she first saw and loved the Greek hero, and, braving the dangers of the long voyage and a life-long exile, fled with him over the waters to Iolcus.

The ambition of the poet, and the chief interest of the poem to us, is the expression in the epic medium of a subject never treated in that medium before—the passion of love, its symptoms, its splendours, its results. The Medea of Apollonius's romance is a strange, almost a forbidding, figure. When Jason reaches Colchis, she is a young girl living in her father's palace in an enchanted mystery. She and her father are descended from the sun, and all the gloomy, primitive savagery of the elements is concentrated in the king of this distant barbarous realm that lies below the summits of the Caucasus. Hard by, Prometheus is chained to his rock: the islands near at hand swarm with miraculous birds of prey: the land itself is the home of mystery, where the Golden Fleece hangs in its sacred grove guarded by the monstrous snake that never sleeps. The very palace of the king is full of magic: there are miraculous fountains in the court, in the stables there are brazen bulls whose breath is fire and smoke. And the king, the gloomy, savage, monstrous king, brother of

Circe, the fabled witch-queen of the western world, brooding over warnings of disaster, suspicious of all men save his two daughters, the widow of Phrixus, who had brought the Golden Fleece, and the maiden Medea, seems to add to the strange horror of his mysterious realm. Medea, though a mere girl, is already the priestess of Hecate and a skilful witch. She knows and uses the spells which bring the moon goddess from heaven to work her will. By night she wanders through the forests and the clearings gathering the potent simples by which marvels and evils may be wrought. In her chamber she has her chest of horrors, the drugs and potions of her trade. And yet with it all she is a simple maiden, afraid of her father, devoted to her elder sister and her mother, fond of her girl's finery, affectionate and simple with her hand-maids, and when distressed weeping like a child in her sister's arms.

When Jason arrives to demand the Golden Fleece of her father, the young princess is in the hall. With admirable simplicity Jason asks for the fleece, offering to do any service in return for it that the king may demand. To the king's violent outburst he makes a dignified reply, and with but a moment's hesitation agrees to the terms that he shall yoke the fire-breathing bulls to a plough, sow in the furrows, which he must make in the field of Ares, the teeth of a dragon, and when they grow up as armed men encounter them single-handed. Jason is handsome, dignified, and courageous: Medea never takes her eyes off him: when he leaves the hall she follows him with her gaze till he is lost to sight, and her peace of mind has gone for ever. She retires to her chamber, cursing and blessing her hero by turns, cursing him for her lost serenity, blessing him for what he is, and praying for his success. Her soul, says Apollonius, followed his footsteps like a dream. She thought of his looks, of the dress he wore, the tones of his voice, the way he sat as he addressed the king, his bearing as he went out. She thought there was never a man like him; the music of his voice kept ringing in her ears: she grew terrified and wept for his coming death, and as she wept

she prayed for his deliverance to the goddess whom she served: 'And if (she ended her prayer) it be his doom to be vanquished by the bulls, ere that may he be granted to know that I take no pleasure in his cruel fate.' As she sat she fell to thinking how she might save him, but she grew afraid, and, sleep coming on her, she dreamed a dream. She dreamed that Jason had come not for the fleece but for herself, to win her for his wife; that she undertook the task for him and was successful, and that her parents, after first refusing his reward to Jason, finally left it to her to decide; that she chose to go with Jason; and, her parents crying out upon her, she awoke to her perplexities once more. She decided to go to her sister's room for comfort, but shame kept her back, and at last she threw herself on her face upon her couch and cried bitterly. A passing maid-servant, hearing her weeping, brought her sister to her, but even then she could not bring herself to tell of her trouble. And here Fate played Medea one of her tragic tricks. While Jason was on his way to Colchis he had rescued the grandsons of the king, who had been shipwrecked on their way to Greece. In return for this service they had come back with him as guides, and now feared the anger of the king for bringing strangers to the country: if Jason were defeated what should become of them? After Jason's interview with the king one of these young men had persuaded him to allow them to beg their mother to procure Medea's aid in the coming contest, and while Medea was lamenting in her chamber they had been imploring their mother to get her sister's help. So, when the two sisters met, Medea found her own feelings seconded by her sister's entreaties for her sons' lives. She promised to give Jason all the magic help he might require, and to meet him the next day at the temple of the goddess. But all through the silence of the night in her chamber shame and fear strove to get the mastery of her resolution, till at last she saw no means of escape from her trouble but one. Going to the chest which contained the poisons, she took it on her knee to procure the drug which might bring her pains and her life to an

end together. She bowed across it and wept bitterly, and as she wept she thought of her youth and the sunlight she was to leave for ever. Never had the daylight seemed so fair in retrospect as on that bitter night, and that she might see it still she put shame and fear aside and resolved to live. Through her window she saw the first faint light of dawn, and, drying her eyes, she made ready for her journey to the temple. Driving through the city before the citizens were awake, a radiant figure in the morning sunlight, she reached the temple. There she took her maidens into her confidence and told them of her plans, and they all waited for the Greek hero to arrive. Medea sang for joy, but never the same song for long together: she changed for no reason from one melody to another, ever watching the road, her heart beating at every sound: when he appeared at last, like some bright star in the sky, she could not speak or move; the handmaids withdrew to a distance, and the lovers stood alone face to face, 'silent,' says the poet, 'speaking no word, like unto two oak trees or tall limes, which side by side upon the mountains are rooted, silent upon a windless day: but thereafter smitten by the winds they move and murmur all confusedly.' Jason breaks the long silence by his prayer for her help, the same help that Ariadne once gave to Theseus. Medea without a word hands him the magic drug, feeling that she could as well have plucked the heart out of her bosom to succour him in his need. Almost fainting with her passion, she gives him directions for the use of the drug and for his conduct in the fight; and then, thinking that she would see him no more when he had won the fleece and was gone, she cried with choking tears: 'Oh, and if ever thou shouldst return back to thy home, forget not Medea's name: even so shall I ever remember thee though far away.' She begs him to tell her of his country, and when she is told she renews her charge upon his remembrance, adding that some rumour or bird of passage will warn her if he should forget, and on that day she could wish that some wind might blow her to Greece to reproach him to his face.

Jason, seeing her tears, begs her not to think he will forget her: if she comes to Greece she will come, not to reproach him, but as an honoured guest and to be his wife, never to be parted from him except by death. But the sun was setting, and Jason reminds her that she must turn homewards and meet him some other day. So they part, and Jason goes back to his ship, and that night prepares himself as Medea had instructed. On the morrow the great contest takes place and Jason is victorious. Full of rage the king returns to his palace, while Jason and his men cross the river and moor their ship on the far side. Medea has heard the news of her lover's victory: she is full at once of longing and of fear: she cannot believe that her father will not discover her treachery, and, slipping from her chamber and the palace, she flies in the moonlight across the meadows to the riverside. Thrice in her clear young voice she calls upon Jason. Jason hears her and rows the galley across: they go together to the grove of the sacred fleece: Medea by her spells lulls the serpent to sleep: Jason secures the spoil, and, hurrying to the ship in the early morning twilight, they make for the open sea and liberty and Greece.

Now what is it precisely that Apollonius has done, and why has he done it? In the first place he has made a story of romantic love the main episode in an epic poem, whose traditional subject was the *κλέα ἀνδρῶν*—'the glorious deeds of heroes.' This was a complete and deliberate breach with the epic tradition. But Apollonius has so far avoided a direct comparison with the classical epic as to choose a subject for his poem which was not included in the epic canon. He has laid his scene, not in the land consecrated to the epic, but on the remote confines of the Greek world, and his heroine is not one of the Greek epic ladies but a princess of the barbarians. And in this remote country, where all is mysterious and awful, there is found a maiden whose young heart gives itself over to all the bitter anguish and the sweet delirium of love. The romantic interest and the choice of a strange heroine are alike typical. Apollonius did not yield to the tempta-



tion before which some of his contemporaries fell to bring Helen and Andromache into their light tales of passion in the elegiac strain. He was taking enough liberties as it was with the tradition: he avoided a comparison in the matter of his story. But this was not all. His romantic interest in love he shared with his age, and to introduce romance into the epic, while a breach with tradition, cannot in itself have been so serious an offence in the eyes of his contemporaries. But (and here we are upon delicate ground, as our direct information about his contemporaries is so scanty) he seems to have treated his subject in a way in which his contemporaries did not. He treated it in the high and serious spirit which became the epic medium. He did not dally and play with it: he did not, for all his insistence upon the physical symptoms, the tears and the faintings and the blushes, make it morbid or offensive: he did not aim at the witty conceits or the *tours de force* so dear to the elegists. He is straightforward, serious, and simple; and I cannot but think that this, in the eyes of Callimachus and his circle, was the head and front of his offending. He thought of beauty where they sought nothing but an effect.

The other question, why Apollonius did what he has done, is not so easy to answer. Much must be set down to the influence of contemporary writers, and more perhaps is due to the social conditions of his time. The great ladies of the Hellenistic courts were strange figures in the Greek world. With a Spartan freedom they had a charm and a state which the ladies of Sparta never knew. They were great political figures: they intrigued and set the world by the ears: they turned their affections where they pleased, and set the hearts of kings on fire: and their splendour was a thing dazzling and undreamed of. A society in which such women reign demands a laureate of love. The court poets sang their charms, and told of their bright locks changed to stars. The poetry of their courts was a poetry of love and wit. And Apollonius meditated a higher flight than any. He had his tale to please a princess's ear, a tale of a magic

princess, with a splendour and a glamour of her own, the victim of a love with whose serious and passionate tale he would employ his pen. But he was a true poet. The *Argonautica* has many grave faults, but the poet shakes them nearly all from him when he comes to tell of the blossoming of youth's passion in a virgin heart.

Apollonius was influenced in his treatment of the tale by the tradition of the drama side by side with that of the epic. There is the double plot, with the point at which the two join to produce the solution of the situation; at one and the same time the passion which is to make the heroine ready for her great resolve is slowly gathering strength, and (unknown to her) the plot of her sister's sons to involve her in a compact to help Jason is being matured. When Medea and her sister meet, and Medea, ashamed of her passion, decides to lie about the cause of her grief, the lie that the poet puts upon her lips is chosen with a dramatic instinct. She explains to her sister that her grief is due to the thought of the danger in which her nephews are involved, and the falsehood is just what is required to blend the two situations into one: henceforth the drama moves forward to its end. But while the treatment is so far of the dramatic type, there is not the painful ethical conflict which Greek drama might have led us to expect. There is no question of the relative duty which Medea owes to her parents and her lover. She thinks of her father's anger and of leaving her old home more as obstacles to be overcome than as part of the problem which she has to solve for herself. The hesitations which beset her are not ethical. They are the trembling uncertainty of a maiden confronted for the first time with the waves of passion which threaten to bear her away. Her question is rather 'Shall I?' than 'Ought I?' and it is this self-contained independence of her mind which makes her a truly epic heroine. She is surrounded, it is true, by the toils which Fate weaves for her, but it is not Fate which compels her choice. Confronted with the dilemma which Fate puts before her, 'Will you save your nephews at the cost of defeating a

cruel father's purpose, or will you interpret your duty to him as your warrant for leaving them to their doom?' she solves in her mind not it, but her own personal problem—'Shall I, or shall I not, yield to this sweet compulsion which is the call of my own heart?' The answer she gives to the one solves the other, but the important point is that her own personal problem is the only one which in her own heart she has considered.

So in this episode of Apollonius's epic many strands are interwoven; there is the high human freedom of the epic, the fate-wrought compulsion, the suspense, and the solution with which the drama produces its most powerful effects, the passionate abandon of the lyrical spirit, the psychological interest of the Hellenistic elegy: and all combine to produce this masterpiece of romantic poetry as the last word of the old Greek epic. The *Medea* henceforth known to the Greek world was not only the tragic and embittered figure of the deserted wife which Euripides has made immortal, not only the witch whose name lay upon the confines of the world of reality and the world of magic; she was the type of womanhood who in her girlhood's dawn had abandoned home and friends at the call of love, had borne hardship by her lover's side, and had found in the end, for all her reward, the bitterness of a love betrayed. It was a great achievement, and had a far-reaching effect upon later poetry.

The Romans became acquainted early with the *Medea* of Euripides in a translation by Ennius which seems to have remained popular till Cicero's time, and there are indications that Pacuvius also adapted or translated the same play. The poet Attius also made *Medea* the heroine of a tragedy of which the subject was the early love of *Medea* for Jason and her escape from Colchis, but the extant fragments do not enable us to divine the treatment of the theme. And among the fragments of Latin tragedies which have been preserved to us without the names of their authors, there are several of which both the young *Medea* and Jason's deserted wife are the heroine. Ovid was in later

times to write a *Medea*, and upon the whole it seems evident that her story was well known upon the Roman stage. In the first century B.C. Varro of Atax wrote a poem called *Argonautae*, in which he may have translated or adapted the older epic: we have no certain evidence to go upon. But while *Medea* was familiar to the Roman theatre, it was not to her legend that Roman epic genius turned for a subject in the republican age. The wars of Rome engaged the pens of Ennius and Naevius, and when Virgil came to devote his genius to the composition of a Latin epic, it was to the mythical past of his country that his attention turned. But Virgil was too profound a student of Greek poetry to neglect the example and the lessons of any period in that noble literature. While he revered his master Homer, he was an appreciative and discriminating critic of the poetry of the Hellenistic world; and it was his ambition to write an epic which should satisfy at once the instincts of his Italian patriotism, mould the Roman tongue to its most lofty music, and embody the poetic experience of all his predecessors both Greek and Roman. He must continue the traditions of Naevius and Ennius, perpetuate the remote serenity of Homer, and satisfy the exigencies of a complex and sophisticated civilization.

We shall not appreciate Virgil's art, or indeed understand his work, unless we keep in mind not only his inspiration as a great poet, but his conscious ambition to be the pattern and the teacher of his age. A poet like Virgil was indeed in the estimation of the world inspired, but he must bring to bear upon his inspiration a careful knowledge of the history and theory of his art: his fine frenzy must be controlled by considerations of a purely intellectual nature; his predecessors were his teachers and his models; he was a member of a great artistic guild with a common store, upon which he might freely draw, not only of general lessons, but even of particular episodes and phrases. Every practitioner of the art made the burden which his successors had to bear heavier than it had been: for what he contributed of his

own added to the common heritage. Virgil could not, even if he would, escape the consideration which Apollonius had made imperative—in what way could he best introduce into the Roman epic that new *motif* of love with which Apollonius had enriched the epic tradition? It was a problem that called for a careful ingenuity. The story of the origins of Rome was confined within certain wide limits by tradition: the main lines of the story of the founder could not be varied at will. Aeneas was a Homeric character, and so much as Homer tells of him was canonical: but the Roman part of his career was not so fixed, and here Virgil found what he required. Naevius seems to have invented or adopted a legend which brought Aeneas in the course of his wanderings between Troy and Latium to Carthage, where Queen Dido reigned. This episode Virgil borrowed and enlarged for his own purpose. But it required consummate skill in the handling. Aeneas was a man of middle life, already a widower, and with a new bride waiting for him in Latium, alliance with whom was, it is true, to be more a matter of political convenience than a union of hearts. The interposition of a romantic attachment between the lost wife and the bride to be was not to be thought of. The *gravitas* required of the founder of the Roman fortune forbade it; and the fatal entanglement of Antony with a barbarian queen was a recent warning which Virgil could neither forget nor ignore. On the other hand, he must not attribute to his hero any uncouth asceticism. The great Odysseus had dallied, on his way to Ithaca and Penelope, with the charms of Circe and Calypso; Jason on his way to the land of the Colchians had shared the couch of Hypsipyle in Lemnos; and what they had permitted themselves Aeneas might be pardoned for. But a poet and a Roman, on the verge of the Christian era, could not leave such an episode just where even Apollonius had left it. The Roman public took, it would seem, a rather stricter view upon such matters than did Greek tradition: and a Roman student of philosophy could not avoid contemplating the implications of such an entanglement.

And the poet saw in the passion and fury of the abandoned queen (for abandoned she must be in the end) something to which his own sympathies drew him—an opportunity at once for the poetic description of a great passion and a great despair, and for a treatment of it deeper and more humane than had yet been attempted. Dido will not let her lover depart with the easy if tearful acquiescence shown by a Calypso or a Hypsipyle; and it would not be right that she should. Aeneas, it is true, must leave her: destiny called him, and a great mission: the will of the gods for him laid its high claim upon his unquestioning obedience: even in the palace of Carthage and in the arms of its queen he is *pious Aeneas* still. But if destiny claims its heroes and its servants it is at a great cost, and they are not the only mortals who must pay the price for their glory. The women whose hearts must bleed have their own burden, and the poet, whose tender humanity broods over his whole work, felt that their sacrifice merited at least the deliberate regard of mankind. But Virgil is far from apportioning praise or blame. He is too great a poet for that. An unintelligent criticism, forgetful of time and place, disdainful of great art, insists upon its importunate questionings. Does the poet intend us to feel that Aeneas had done wrong? Does he not inculcate (even by implication) a moral lesson? Did it require the experience of the descent into the underworld to purge the hero of his transgression? To such questions Virgil has no answer to make. We must read his poem as we read life itself. It is enough for him to put before us the passionate and stricken queen and leave her story as a perpetual memorial.

In his treatment of the story of Dido it is of interest to notice how Virgil is at once influenced by, and improves upon, the treatment of the *Argonautica*. In both stories the sister of the heroine serves as a confidant; but whereas in Apollonius, Chalciope, Medea's sister, is interested only in the fate of her sons and not in Medea's infatuation, Anna in the *Aeneid* has no interest beyond that of serving her sister; and

while again Apollonius uses Chalciope's intervention to serve the purpose of a second plot and give a dramatic turn to the narrative, Virgil with a juster appreciation of the epic method makes no such use of Anna. Anna is her sister's natural counsellor and friend, who merges in, without complicating, the story—is, in fact, the heroine's second (if less noble) self. Virgil borrows, too, from Apollonius the episode of the dream, but he employs it for a different purpose. In Apollonius the dream of Medea is a maiden's romantic fantasy: she dreams that the hero has had her in mind all the time, and has come to Colchis, not for the fleece, but for her: she performs a spectacular and miraculous rescue, and then chooses him for her husband before her parent's face. How differently conceived is the dream of Dido! During the nights before Aeneas decided on his departure, Dido, after many portents of disaster and many memories had come into her mind, fell asleep and dreamed—a recurrent and insistent dream: she was alone and deserted in a solitary land, marching, always marching, along an interminable road, and looking in vain in the solitude for some trace of the lost Trojans. There is a world of difference here. Dido's dream comes from that mysterious realm where sorrow and experience are transmuted into those dread shapes which are horror personified. And that the *Argonautica* was the influence which induced Virgil to introduce the magic ceremonies into the tale of Dido I have little doubt, and in fact this influence has not been thoroughly assimilated. It is very difficult to make all the references in Virgil's story to Dido's recourse to the witch in her extremity consistent with one another. But this does not affect the question of the artistic use which the poet made of his material. With Apollonius, however, the reader is never quite at his ease; how comes it that so young, so innocent, and so simple a maiden is at the same time so potent and so redoubtable a witch? We are at somewhat of a disadvantage here, it is true, compared with an ancient reader to whom the thought of witchcraft was

as of some customary and ascertained truth: but not all ancient readers believed in witchcraft, and in any case the witch was always a figure of dread. Apollonius's Medea passes from one character to the other with such apparent ease and with such natural simplicity that her double character perplexes and baffles the reader. Had she been all witch or all maiden she had been more intelligible, but the exigencies of the legend did not permit of either solution, and Apollonius has to do the best he can. His success was extraordinary, but the difficulty is still there; it must have been there even to a Greek reader. But in Virgil the magic ceremonies are introduced, not as something normal and almost natural, but as a mysterious and secret rite to which the queen on the verge of madness turns as a last resource. Whether they are designed by Dido as a last despairing effort to bring Aeneas back, or as an expedient to banish him for ever from her mind, and these half unconsciously, or are merely a blind to cover her resolve to die (that and no more), Virgil does not make quite certain. I am inclined to think that Virgil intends us to assume that Dido in her conscious mind meant them to be a trick to deceive her sister while her hopes still played with the possibility that they might succeed in winning, if not her lover, at least oblivion. But, be that as it may, these awful powers of the unseen and mysterious world are not the mere everyday exercise of skill which they appear to be in Apollonius, but something infrequent, secret, and apart. They are wrought by a priestess from the remote Western world; they are done in secret and with a shamed face; and they fail. They are not of this world, but they are the servants of destiny; they cannot heal the sorrows of the heart. Virgil's profound humanity told him that there are wounds too deep for any power which mortal hands can wield to bind or staunch. Even in Hades the unhappy queen is still resentful of her wounds. She will not look at her betrayer when he meets her in the myrtle groves.

But in spite of all outward resem-



blances and adaptations, Virgil has set himself a task very different from that of Apollonius. His predecessor has told a tale of romantic love: he will deal with a tale of passion. Apollonius treats of a young maiden's first love for the man to whom she gives her heart for ever; Virgil, of the passion of a widowed queen for the widowed hero whom fate has thrown in her way, to whom she gives herself without resistance in the hope, but with no security, that he will stay with her. But while I thus distinguish 'love' and 'passion,' I must avoid a misconception. Virgil is not expounding a moral thesis: he has in mind no distinction between legitimate and illegitimate connexions. He is concerned with something deeper and more universal. He is concerned with the passionate attraction that passes between men and women. That attraction is something quite distinct from, though bound up with, the phenomenon that we call 'first love,' which was what occupied Apollonius. And in the queen who had lost the husband of her youth, to whom she was still passionately devoted, and the hero who had so tragically lost his beloved Creusa and was still to wed another consort, this attraction, its psychology, its symptoms, and its result, the poet could personify without risk of misunderstanding. This was no romance of a bachelor and a maiden, no simple tale of the wooing of a bride; it was a tale of passion isolated from all other social feelings, studied as a thing apart. Without a word of praise or blame, but with infinite pity and understanding, Virgil tells the story of Aeneas and Dido.

Dido is no soft yielding heroine: she is a woman of action and great dignity. She has avenged her husband's murder, and in a strange country, surrounded by foes with whom she must bargain, has founded without assistance a great city. She has repelled the not disinterested suitors in the neighbourhood who would have made themselves rulers of the new city in her right. She has not forgotten Sychaeus, whose shrine in the palace is honoured with daily sacrifice. She is not idle or a dreamer: she superintends the building of her

capital and administers judgment among her subjects: her recreation is in the chase, to which she goes with her lords upon occasion. She has no children; but the feelings of a mother are strong in her, and she caresses little Ascanius as if he had been her own son. She is proud of her lineage and her position and her unblemished character, and looks to live and die as the unconsorted queen of her new realm.

She is attracted to Aeneas first by his looks and bearing, and then by pity for the sad story of his troubles: little Ascanius by his beguiling ways feeds the flame: and when Aeneas gives her the full tale of his misfortunes pity sets her heart on fire: to such a hero what woman would not succumb? She tells her sister that, were her heart not given to Sychaeus, she has never seen the man whom she would more gladly embrace, and Anna talks to her of the folly of being bound by old attachments at the cost of losing a lover. The queen is more and more inflamed, and when on a hunting party she and Aeneas are separated from their companions, at last in a cave in the wooded hills during a thunderstorm and without a word she yields herself wholly to her passion. From that day, with a heart that misgave her, she regards herself as Aeneas's wife; and he settles down to share her duties as her consort.

All this is in accord with the manners and customs of the heroic age, though no doubt in Virgil's time as in ours such a connexion would have been regarded as illicit. That Virgil not only thought it was so himself, but has intended us to share his view, has been assumed by his use of the word *culpa*, once in Dido's mouth and once in his own. But Dido, though she reproaches herself bitterly in the end, never reproaches herself for this: she is even sorry that she has not borne Aeneas a son, that in her affection for it she might find comfort for the loss of its father, just as Hypsipyle in the *Argonautica* looks forward to the time when her son should be born to Jason. The only fault she knows is that, having sworn fidelity to Sychaeus's memory, she has not kept her word. The lost reputation she laments is not that of having in the common phrase



'lost her honour': it is the reputation of being a queen whose heart was set not on the things of a woman, but on glory and renown, in the pride of which she had repulsed all suitors, which being now lost she must seek, as other women would have done earlier, an alliance with some of the princes of the neighbouring tribes. All this in Virgil's own way is made abundantly clear. Her *culpa* is the liability to passion, licit or illicit makes no matter: and her fate is not the punishment of her fault, but the inscrutable destiny that wrecks all mortal hopes and plans.

Virgil is careful that we shall not misjudge his heroine or set her down as a wanton. She is under the influence of a passion which amounts to an almost irresistible compulsion. She is, in the pathological language of the erotic poetry of the day, wounded to death. She does not yield willingly or easily. Her sister, the one confidant that she has, and who loves her dearly, is all in favour of the new interest that Dido has experienced. Anna represents to Virgil the average woman who looks at things from (as we say) the standpoint of common sense. Why (she urges) be a widow for ever, without children, without the satisfaction of love returned? Why risk your safety in a strange land and among hostile tribes out of a mistaken fidelity to the dead? Sychaeus is no more and your new passion cannot hurt him; think of yourself and of your future. Keep Aeneas for the winter, at least, and you will find that everything will turn out as you wish. This is the language of the world: it is heard every day. But Dido is still uncertain: she turns for advice to the gods: she consults seers and the entrails of victims: she prays at altars which had witnessed her prayers before. Why is this, if what she contemplated was something that she knew to be lawful? Is it not that Virgil means us to suppose that Dido was the conscious victim of a guilty passion, or at the least was doubtful whether what she wished was right?

Virgil's psychology is deeper and subtler than this: her hesitations are only part of the general disturbance of mind which assailed her, and these with

a master's hand Virgil has described. Here and there we have distant reminiscences of Apollonius, but on the whole Virgil, with a different end in view, adopts a different treatment. Medea's love is all fresh, keen, and active: it stimulates and refreshes her whole being: her fears are only the prelude to a fuller life than ever she had known before. She plans not how to keep her lover by her, but how to help him to escape, even though that meant that she should not see him again for ever. She knows the danger, but accepts it willingly, and only when (as she thinks) it is upon her, her lover being almost in safety, does she fly to give him her last warning, and goes with him more as an inevitable consequence of his being saved than as what she had planned for herself. But this is not the picture that Virgil draws of Dido; she has helped Aeneas, it is true, but not out of love: she knew him only as a shipwrecked stranger when she took him in. But once she grew to love him, it is the passion of possession that is uppermost. She must have and keep him. His mission is not the object of her solicitude, it is an obstacle to all her hopes: Dido will never, like Medea, assist her lover in his task if she can help it. Her passion drives out of her mind all that has filled it before. To be with her lover is her whole aim; and when he has left the palace she spends sleepless nights, bitterly picturing to herself his looks and ways, not, like Medea, seeing him as though her spirit was following him, but dwelling morbidly upon his image, whipping and exciting her desires. All her activities are at an end: no longer does she administer justice or superintend the building of her city or mingle in the life of her subjects. Secluded in her palace she broods over her feelings, and all else goes to the wall. Nor is it any different with Aeneas: though Virgil does not in his case insist upon the physical and mental symptoms in the same way. But he, too, forgets his mission, his son, his comrades, and the promise of his new realm in Italy: he finds those days in Carthage sweet to his senses: when at last he must give them up and resume his destined voyage, he, like Dido

(though with more reserve), sheds unavailing tears, and has to struggle desperately to shake off his amorous lethargy. What is the meaning of this? It is because Virgil designs to treat (not as a moralist, but as a poet) the theme of passion isolated from all those factors which have made the love of a man for a woman part of the order of nature and the structure of society. That love assimilates itself to life: it is a factor of human activity: it subserves the purposes of nature and of the life of mankind. But there is another passion that comes between man and woman, divorced from their normal lives, striking across them and deflecting their purpose, as inevitable often as the other, not commonly regarded as different, and yet how strange in its effects. It shatters and disturbs the whole mind, it subverts the plans of man, it breaks and enervates its victims. Dido's hesitations and fears and timid consultations are not the voice of reason and conscience speaking before it is too late: they are the first symptoms of that emotion which it is the poet's task to sketch with a sympathy that does not shrink from its utmost analysis. Into a life chosen and ordered it has come and overturned all. At its approach plans and projects, old affections and fidelities, stagger and withdraw: and in the waste spaces they have left it spreads as a new and all-enveloping influence. The instincts and habits of a lifetime vanish at its approach and become changed into their opposites, returning at the last to mock in their new shape the affrighted and possessed soul. And this is why Dido seems to turn into a virago at the first hint of her lover's flight. The outburst of the new spirit that possesses the once beautiful and stately queen is terrific: rarely has the portraiture of passion in poetry reached such heights as in those burning lines in which Dido, bowed and broken and despairing, entreats and curses her false lover by turns. Virgil does not, as some commentators have imagined, show us in Dido the passion of a barbarian as opposed to a civilised woman: it is not because she is a Carthaginian, an alien from the civilisation of the Grecian world, that the queen rages

without restraint: it is because she has been brought to this depth by a passion that has shattered by its contact all that she was before it came: sweeping away pride and training and shame, it leaves her with nothing to check the surge of her fury.

Nor is *pius Aeneas* spared by the poet. The magnificence of Virgil's study of Dido has overshadowed his equally careful but less prominent analysis of the effect of passion upon her lover. If she neglects her city, he neglects his mission. The warrior, the leader, the guide of his followers, turns into a courtier dancing attendance upon a queen, hunting not as he had often done before upon foot with his hardy comrades, but on horseback, gorgeously apparelled, the centre of a gay cavalcade with a lady at his rein. He attends his lady upon tours of her city, not so much to see the work that is going forward as for an excuse to be in her company. And when the awakening comes his first thought is how the brave knight may best cheat and lie to his mistress. He descends to furtive orders to his captains, and even confesses to them that he is afraid to face Dido with the truth. To her he prevaricates and hedges; he is apologetic and almost fawning. His breakdown is as complete as her own.

But while Aeneas has broken down completely, he is capable of recovery: the warning of heaven does not come to him in vain. He rises from his degradation, meanly and furtively it is true, but still with determination, and prepares with more and more resolution as the parting approaches to resume his destiny. Italy is still before him, though the vision of the coming kingdom is dim. *Italiam non sponte sequor* is no mere idle form of apology: it is the bare truth, for the land he was leaving behind him had become sweeter to him than Italy. But Dido from the day of his decision is *Dido moritura*: she is a dying woman. For her there is no recovery. She has essayed a noble task, one granted to few women to attempt, to still fewer to perform. But the glory by which she reached out towards the stars is quenched. Death is all that she has to wait for now. Virgil never showed more clearly

than in this his master's knowledge of the heart of man and woman. Man may escape from these troubles, but not woman. This is no relic of any ancient and obsolete doctrine of the inferiority of women. There never was an age in which any prejudice of this kind was less likely to be born or to be perpetuated. It is the deep insight of the poet and the psychologist—an insight which no passing fashion, no doctrine of emancipation, could change or dim. He is intent only on the fact and upon the pity of Dido's unescapable fate. On the final scene he lavishes his utmost art, too full of pity for a word of comment or even of regret. To the last the queen's poor heart is aching, and her last words of relief at leaving her wrecked life behind her are joined to the wish that her lover may carry with him a portent of his own doom.

It is impossible to study this masterpiece of description and psychology without asking the question how such an episode fitted into its place in the epic of which it forms a part. Critics have busied themselves with the question how far such an experience, so minutely detailed, is compatible with the conception of Aeneas as the hero of a Roman epic. Is his fame not tarnished by his share in the tragedy of Dido's death? Such questions are, I submit, the fruit of a misconception. It is, of course, a gross error to apply to Aeneas the strictest standards of a Christian civilisation and declare that a man who betrayed a woman is not a fit hero for an epic poem. But it is an error not so gross, but almost as

great, to raise the moral issue at all. The epic is a tale of high adventures. As Homer loves to dwell upon the details of the wounds which his heroes gave and got, so Virgil dwells upon inner and more vital experiences. Of these the episode in Carthage is one. From a danger greater than any he had encountered the hero of the *Aeneid*, not without damage, escaped and went upon his way. Odysseus in the den of the Cyclops had been in danger of his life: Aeneas in the palace of Dido had risked his destiny. Each had been delivered because the gods watched over them. But there is this difference between Homer and Virgil: the Roman poet cannot, the son of a more reflective age, the heir of a more romantic tradition, pass by, as Homer would have done, the study of the feelings. Dido was not simply the material of an adventure: she was a woman whose love was as much the stuff of life as the fortunes of a warrior; and he cannot refrain from a study of her passion as moving as it is profound. But it is the study, not of a moralist, but of a poet, sympathetic and austere, throwing a strange and moving radiance of pity and of rapture over the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, of our mortal life. With the grave reticence born of understanding he tells the story of the passionate queen and passes on, content with having fashioned an image of inextinguishable desire.

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THE *PSYCHOMACHIA* OF PRUDENTIUS.

THE *Psychomachia*, widely read as it was in the Middle Ages, has won little appreciation from modern critics, apart from the recognition of the interesting place which it holds in literary history.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Glover almost alone has a good word to say for it. No doubt moral allegory does not appeal to every age. Bunyan's *Holy War*, which recounts the attack on the town of Mansoul, is very little read nowadays; and we are told that even *The Pilgrim's Progress* is much less read and known than it used to be. The *Psychomachia*, it must be admitted, cannot compete as a tale with Bunyan's great allegories; and instead of Bunyan's natural, easy prose narrative it offers us high classical epic, and does its best to adapt the language and technique of Virgil to an abstract Christian theme. What chance can it have? Yet the adaptation itself is interesting and in some ways curiously successful. In the Latin work, again, there is much less than Bunyan's richness of spiritual observation and teaching. The zest with which Prudentius (perhaps owing to his Spanish blood) dwells on the gruesome details of slaughter often obscures the fact that the poem has a religious purpose. Indeed, it is one of M. Puech's complaints that the *Psychomachia* is devoid of religious feeling. But this is not quite fair. Throughout a great part of the poem the spiritual aspect is not made prominent, but it is not absent. In the first speech which occurs Purity taunts Lust with daring to tempt mankind after the birth of Christ in the flesh; for by that birth, she says, the flesh itself has been made divine, since Christ in assuming our nature raised us to His: *Inde omnis iam diva caro est, quae concipit illum, naturamque Dei consortis foedere sumit . . . Ille manet quod semper erat, quod non erat esse incipiens: nos quod fuimus iam non sumus, aucti nascendo in melius.*

<sup>1</sup> Puech, *Prudence*; Ebert, *Geschichte der Christlichlateinischen Literatur*; de Labriolle, *Histoire de la Littérature Latine Chrétienne*; Glover, *Life and Letters in the Fourth Century*; Raby, *Christian Latin Poetry*. Mr. Glover and Mr. Raby mention the importance of the poem for mediaeval religious art.

This is not mere cold doctrine. The actual fighting is brought to an end by the contest between Avarice and Good Works (*Operatio*).<sup>2</sup> Avarice is the most dangerous of all the Vices, and Good Works the least in rank of all the Virtues ('*militiae postrema gradu*'), Faith being the greatest; but it is her defeat of Avarice that marks the completion of the victory. This touch is suggested by the story of the rich young man (Matt. xix. 16) who, having kept all the commandments from his youth up, asked, 'What lack I yet?' and received the answer, 'Go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor.' Good Works has given all her substance to the poor, and so enters the fight lightened of every burden. Surely in such passages the spiritual lesson and the poet's religious feeling are not to be missed. And the poem rises to a definitely religious climax. When the Vices are all defeated and Heresy is torn asunder, a gorgeous temple of precious stones is built for the reception of the Son of Man. Different views have been held as to the meaning of this temple. In its construction Prudentius has taken many hints from the picture of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse; but the temple is not the New Jerusalem, nor yet, as Rösler seems to have thought, the chief seat of the Catholic Church. It is erected in the soul of man, where the moral warfare has been waged, and the suggestion of it comes from St. Paul's words: 'Ye are the temple of the living God.' The figure of the soul as a temple appears more than once in other poems of Prudentius;<sup>3</sup> and what he wishes to express here is that the moral victory over the Vices is only preliminary to the consecration of the soul to God, without which it is insufficient:

*nam quid terrigenas ferro pepulisse phalangas  
culparum prodest, hominis si filius arce  
aetheris inlapsus purgati corporis urbem  
intret inornatam templi splendentis egenus?*  
(816 ff.)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> 573 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Cath.* 4, 13-18, 25-27; *Perist.* 10, 346.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. also the lines at the end of the poem, especially 902-915, where the religious devotion of the poet is evident.



To return, however, to moral allegory, what the critics find hard to bear is the epic treatment of personified abstractions. To M. Puech and M. de Labriolle the poem is an unhappy experiment; to turn the soul into a battlefield, where bloodless abstractions fight in the manner of real epic heroes, and to narrate their contests in the high epic style, is a mere pedantic exercise. The lofty language and constant employment of Virgilian phraseology only serve to make more prominent the poverty of the substance, and the result is a parody of the *Aeneid*. But we ought to remember how large a part was played in Roman life by such figures as Pax, Spes, Fides, Honos, Virtus, Victoria, Pietas, Concordia. As the old mythology of gods and heroes wore thinner and thinner, these personifications of abstract ideas became increasingly prominent and important. Mr. Raby remarks that such personification was part of the 'stock-in-trade' of the later poets; but it was much more than that. Playing from early times an important rôle in the religion of private life, appearing in poetry from Ennius onwards, in prose a recognised device of the orator, it was encouraged by art too, and it grew rapidly on the ruins of the old religion. On the coinage, the most widely diffused form of art, personifications began to take a large place towards the close of the Republic, and in the early centuries of the Empire this tendency showed an immense development. In the fourth century it underwent some decline, perhaps for reasons connected with Christian belief; but it still appeared, and we can see in the case of Victory one of the ways in which Christianity took over and modified to its own purposes features of paganism which it could not abolish.<sup>1</sup> Vaguely conceived as such characters were at first, literary imagination, too, had long begun to portray them more vividly and dramatically.<sup>2</sup> The Roman in his pagan religious exercises had been accustomed of old to attributing some vague sort of power to these personified qualities; and the Christian, though he

did not worship them, had good reason for doing so too, for he was very conscious of their force in his moral life, and accustomed to the notion of a struggle between powers of good and evil. M. Puech claims that allegorical figures should be reserved for the use of mystics, who cannot express their thoughts in any other way; whereas in the *Psychomachia* we have only the simplest of Christian ideas, and nothing at all that could not be said in plain language. That is to say, Prudentius ought to have written a plain sermon; and the argument would apply almost equally to Bunyan. But the plain sermon does not always make the strongest appeal to human nature. The Fathers of the Church, in some of their most practical treatises, had personified moral qualities with some elaboration, and passages in their works have been pointed out which may or may not have had some inspiration for Prudentius.<sup>3</sup> It looks as if such figures were still capable of a vividness that could give reality to an heroic treatment. Prudentius took advantage of a mode of thought which was familiar but still forcibly significant; and when he wished to present to readers of his time, educated in the classical tradition, a vivid picture of the soul's history, it is hard to see in what form he could have cast his poem except the heroic. Fides and Concordia, the leaders of his band, Spes and Discordia, and others of his characters were already familiar, and might have figured without criticism in the action of a purely pagan epic like some of Claudian's. The Christian world of Prudentius' time was not yet so thoroughly christianised as to have forgotten its old ways of thinking. But Christianity gave to the old modes a new content and meaning, so that Fides became the Catholic Faith and Discordia became Heresy, just as the pagan Victoria was transformed into the Christian Angel of Victory.

No one denies to Prudentius the credit of having originated this type of poem, as he originated the Christian ode and (to borrow the term applied by

<sup>1</sup> Mattingly, *Roman Coins*, pp. 68, 163 ff., 239, 250.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Seneca, *De Vita Beata* 7.

<sup>3</sup> Tertullian, *De Patientia* 15, *De Spectaculis* 29; Cyprian, *De Mortalitate* 4; Ambrose, *De Abraham*, 2, 4, 17, *De Cain et Abel* 1, 4-5.



a recent reviewer to the *Peristephanon*) the Christian ballad. An attempt was indeed made in a German dissertation<sup>1</sup> to prove that the *Psychomachia* is later in date than Claudian's *Gigantomachia* on the ground that it is closely dependent on Claudian for construction and language and even for its title. But Weyman, in an article recently reprinted in his *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Christlich-lateinischen Poesie*, showed the weakness of that case. The titles are not parallel except in form; for while '*Gigantomachia*' is the fight of the Giants, '*Psychomachia*' is the fight for the soul. Hoefer produced a large number of alleged parallels in language, but many of them are mere coincidences, due to both writers imitating a classical poet. Bergman's index of imitations (in his recent edition of the text of Prudentius) cuts them down to fifteen, none of them from the *Gigantomachia* as we have it; and even these are not striking. There is indeed a sense in which the *story* of the Giants (or the Titans) may have some significance for our poem as part of the background of ideas out of which it came. Prudentius of course knew the tale;<sup>2</sup> and Christian ways of thinking about virtue and sin bear some obvious analogies to it. The Vices, like the Titans, are born of the earth: Prudentius (*Psych.* 816) calls them '*terrigenas phalangas*'; and there is war between the earth-born flesh ('*viscera limo effigiata*') and the spirit, which is from heaven ('*sereno editus adflatu*').<sup>3</sup> But the poem bears a much more actual relation to Virgil than to Claudian.

The reader cannot fail to notice a great deal of borrowing from Virgil and other poets, and it is true that here Prudentius takes more from Virgil than he does elsewhere, as a glance through Bergman's index will show. But it is a great exaggeration to speak of the *Psychomachia* as almost a *cento* of Virgil;<sup>4</sup> and it is unjust to accuse Prudentius of transferring Virgilian phrases and ideas

to his poem in a mechanical and unintelligent way. After full allowance is made for the extent to which his mind was soaked in Virgil, there is a considerable residuum which shows that he could use borrowed material in his own way, making it live anew in true adaptation to his own purpose, which is what Virgil himself often did with conspicuous success.<sup>5</sup> A good example is in the incident of Avarice, who, finding that in her own character she cannot harm the Virtues, disguises herself as the Virtue Thrift, and in that array does much execution. The device is suggested by Coroebus in *Aeneid* II. putting on the harness of the Greek Androgeos,<sup>6</sup> but it is used here with peculiar appropriateness and with true observation. It is clear that in structural ideas as well as in language the poem does owe much to the *Aeneid*, and a little consideration of the borrowings may suggest what Prudentius' conception of his subject really was. It is noticeable that a large proportion of the verbal imitations of Virgil come from the last books of the *Aeneid*. Neglecting mere tags like '*dixerat*' or '*haec ubi dicta dedit*' and a few phrases or lines which one might hesitate to call reminiscences of Virgil at all, of the instances cited by Bergman from the *Aeneid* half are from Books IX. to XII. and a quarter are from Book XII. itself. Nowhere else in Prudentius, I think, do these books figure to anything like this extent, and it is clear that while composing this poem he had Aeneas' conflict with Turnus much in his mind. It is not the mere imitation of Virgil that is significant, but the suggestions which come to Prudentius from the contest of the divinely commissioned Trojans with the present inhabitants of their promised land under 'proud Turnus.' The Virtues too, like Aeneas and his band, are under divine commission and guidance,<sup>7</sup> and Pride, though not the leader of their foes, is one of the most elaborately drawn figures in the poem. In her speech, which begins at line 206, the

<sup>1</sup> Hoefer, *De Prudentii Poetae Psychomachia et Carminum Chronologia*, Marburg, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Perist.* 10, 84-85.

<sup>3</sup> 904 ff.

<sup>4</sup> I am glad to have the support of Mr. Glover here.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Sikes, *Roman Poetry*, p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Psych.* 550 with *Aen.* II. 390. There is also in the language of 551 a reminiscence of Allecto at *Aen.* VII. 415 changing into the appearance of Calybe.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Psych.* 13-16.

Virtues are represented just as are the Trojans in Italy, as interlopers seeking what does not belong to them; the Vices are the owners of the soul, and a more virile race to boot. The tone of furious contempt which marks the speech is undoubtedly suggested by the speech of Remulus, Turnus' brother-in-law, at *Aeneid* IX. 598.<sup>1</sup> But the adaptation of these borrowed ideas to Prudentius' own plan is perfectly natural and nowise mechanical or unintelligent. We can infer something of the way in which Prudentius thought of his relation to Virgil. Mr. Glover and others have remarked on the strength of his Roman feeling, and there is no need to dwell upon it here. But Prudentius has his own philosophy of history. As he looks back over the history of Rome he sees in it the hand of Providence preparing the world for the reception of Christ;<sup>2</sup> and it is an idealised Rome that he sees now existing, the centre of a world-empire under Christ's government. We are apt to make too sharp a division in our thought between pagan and Christian Rome. Prudentius felt no such discontinuity; he only thought of Rome going forward from strength to strength.<sup>3</sup> In the same way he accepts the works of pagan art<sup>4</sup> and the classical literature without qualms of conscience, such as many Christians felt. But art and literature, too, must come under the rule of Christ. Pilate, when he ordered the superscription on the Cross to be written in Latin as well as in Hebrew and Greek, was wiser than he knew, for Latin was to take its place beside the other tongues in the praise of the Lord.<sup>5</sup> It is in this spirit that Prudentius uses the language and forms of the classical poetry for the treatment of

Christian themes. It is characteristic that for him as for Aeneas the Tiber is still a sacred river,<sup>6</sup> not from any association with a river-god, but because it flows through Christ's earthly capital and by the tombs of Christian martyrs.

Prudentius, then, would not look back on the story of Aeneas without warm interest or merely because he was a lover of Virgil. Believing in the divine mission of Rome as heartily as Virgil did, he had a fuller conception of that mission than Anchises in the *Aeneid* was able to declare, and he saw the ideal fulfilment of it when the far-off successor of Aeneas bowed the knee to Christ:

iam purpura supplex  
sternitur Aeneadae rectoris ad atria Christi,  
vexillumque crucis summus dominator adorat.<sup>7</sup>

But the enthronement of Christianity in the seat of imperial power is no more than the outward aspect of an inner and spiritual victory, and I suggest that Prudentius conceived the war of Aeneas as in a way 'prefiguring' the moral warfare in the soul, divine law and peace subduing ungoverned selfish passions, just as incidents of the Old Testament were often interpreted as prefiguring events of Christian history or elements of Christian experience. As the victory of Aeneas was a step in the providential preparation of the Pax Romana for the consecration of the world to Christ, so the victory of the Virtues over the Vices is preparatory to the consecration of the soul. This does not mean that Prudentius allegorised the *Aeneid*, as some others did, but that he saw spiritual significance in the story; and his endeavour was not only to show that Christian Rome could still speak her own great language, but to display a part of Christian experience as a kind of spiritual *Aeneid*.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the whole passages, especially *Psych.* 206 and 212-213 with *Aen.* IX. 598 and 600.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. *Contra Symmachum* II. 583 ff.; *Perist.* 2, 425.

<sup>3</sup> *Contra Symm.* II. 277 ff., especially 303 ff. and 649-665.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* I. 502 ff.; *Perist.* 2, 481.

<sup>5</sup> *Apotheosis* 376-385.

<sup>6</sup> *Aen.* VIII. 72; *Perist.* 12, 29.

<sup>7</sup> *Apoth.* 446.

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